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ABSTRACT

The mission of the National Council on Vocational Education (NCVE), a presidential advisory council consisting of representatives of business, industry, and education, is to ensure the development of a first-class American work force. As part of this mission, the NCVE held a series of meetings with representatives of various industries to solicit their help in determining: (1) what competencies are required for entry-level workers; and (2) what educational requirements are needed to train the work force. A common theme emerged: the most desirable and successful employees were those having a positive attitude toward work--a strong work ethic. Positive self-esteem fosters a positive work ethic. Individual levels of self-esteem fluctuate, depending on one's familiarity, comfort, and training. NCVE's Working Committee studied the role of parents, educators, and employers and made recommendations on how they might have a more positive impact on young workers. They also examined ways that students can help themselves. The committee recommended that parents and educators find ways to reduce failure among children in their care. The family provides the base for caring and nurturing and is the place where personal values and social responsibility are internalized. A comprehensive plan must integrate the resources of family, school, workplace, and community to encourage the highest skill, quality, and productivity in the workplace. (Sections for parents, educators, students, and employers contain summary steps to follow for attaining a strong work ethic. Members of NCVE, the Work Ethic/Self-Esteem Committee members, and 57 references are included.) (NLA)

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REDISCOVERING OUR NATIONAL VISION:

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BUILDING POSITIVE

SELF-ESTEEM

AND A STRONG

WORK ETHIC

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INTRODUCTION

This report was prepared under the auspices of the National Council on Vocational Education (NCVE), a presidential advisory council consisting of representatives of business, industry, and education. The Council advises the President, Congress and the Secretary of Education on Vocational-Technical Education. The mission of the NCVE is to ensure the development of a world-class American workforce that will maintain the nation's preeminent place in world markets through high-skill, high-wage jobs vital to our standard of living.

As part of this mission, NCVE held a series of meetings with representatives of various industries. The meetings had a twofold purpose: (1) to ask business/industry and labor what occupational competencies are required for entry-level employees and, as a result, (2) to determine the educational requirements needed to train the current and future workforce. Ten industry working groups met to determine occupational competency standards in the areas of: electronics, construction, health services, agribusiness, chemistry-based technology, automated business office systems, food service and hospitality, manufacturing, aviation maintenance, and printing and graphic arts.

During the various meetings and discussions, a common theme emerged: **the most desirable and successful employees were those who could be described as having a positive attitude toward work — a strong work ethic.** Definitions of work ethic did not differ widely among members of the ten working groups. More difficult to pin down, however, was a clear answer to the question, **"How can a positive work ethic be fostered?"**

As they pursued this question, members of the working groups realized that most people with a strong work ethic shared another common personal characteristic — **positive self-esteem.**

This realization raised several questions. Is positive self-esteem a prerequisite for a strong work ethic? Is it an outgrowth of a strong work ethic? Or is it both, as much evidence seems to indicate? These questions led the working groups to still another issue: **"How can our society produce people who exhibit positive self-esteem?"**

In the search for answers, NCVE organized a committee of experts in the area of human performance and potential. This Work Ethic/Self-Esteem Working Committee set out to explore: (1) The relationship between positive self-esteem and a strong work ethic, and (2) Ways that these qualities can be more fully developed among American children — the workforce of our 21st-century world.

This report is the result of those explorations. It describes

the nation's urgent need for a workforce that is second to none. It discusses how positive self-esteem and a strong work ethic are necessary characteristics of world-class employees. It defines those qualities in the light of employability. And it summarizes the roles that parents, students, educators, and employers can play in the development of positive self-esteem and a strong work ethic.

A Call For Action

The United States will only be as strong as its individual citizens and families. Members and organizations in communities must work to solve local problems in order to have an environment where individuals and families can be strong and successful. Improving self-esteem and work ethic is an important first step.

The time is now to develop and implement strategic plans to integrate the resources of family, school, workplace and community, to encourage the highest levels of skill, quality, and productivity in our workforce. It will require the cooperation of all phases of education to accomplish the goals. The publications and self-help information listed in this report will provide assistance in getting started.

Definitions. While there is no one widely accepted definition of either **self-esteem** or **work ethic**, this report is based on definitions developed by the Working Committee from a review of current thinking related to success in life and in the workplace.

Self-esteem is the way one feels about oneself. People with high or positive self-esteem generally feel good about themselves. People with low, or negative self-esteem generally undervalue themselves.

A **work ethic** is the way in which a person approaches a job. People with a strong or positive work ethic display many, if not all, of the qualities of a model worker. People with a weak or negative work ethic lack some or all of these desirable qualities. The Committee condensed the definitions to make them easier to understand and discuss.

Backgrounds. The Working Committee's mandate was a clear one. They were asked to attempt to clarify the relationship between positive self-esteem and a strong work ethic. They were also asked to examine ways that these qualities might be developed more fully among the nation's school-aged children, who will constitute our workforce for the first half of the 21st-century.

The mandate led the Working Committee into an exploration of where and why Americans fail — in the home, in school, in the workplace, and in the community. They learned, for example, that:

- Lack of family discipline and declining family values are major contributors to crime and other social problems.
- Limited quality time together is the greatest threat to the American family.
- More than one in four young Americans never graduate from high school.
- In the inner city, nearly one third of the students in some schools fail to complete the eighth grade.
- Of those students who make it through high school, only about one in twenty has the skills required to perform college-level work or to hold a demanding job.
- In the workplace, 95% of American companies still use old forms of work organizations which result in lower productivity, quality gains and salary.
- The incomes of the top 30% of earners increased while 70% became poorer.
- Shifts in the American economy make it more difficult for adults to meet the basic needs of the

family and to support their children.

Clearly, there is an urgent need to reverse these trends. Because so many children come from single parent families or two income families, the community is an extension of the home and must be considered in building self-esteem and a good work ethic. We must help our youth internalize these principles and ask these two questions before they act: (1) Is it worth the sacrifice? (2) Will it give me what I want?

The Relationship Between One's Self-Esteem and Work Ethic. A person's self-esteem and work ethic impact each other in subtle ways. The existence of a strong work ethic can go a long way toward raising a person's self-esteem. On the other hand, it is equally clear that people who feel good about themselves are likely to have a stronger work ethic than people whose feelings of self-worth are low.

A negative self-esteem can cause low job satisfaction and inadequate motivation which will likely have a negative impact on a person's work ethic. One's self-esteem can be viewed as situational or global. People tend to have an overall sense of their self-worth which they carry with them at all times. Yet, in certain situations, their level of self-esteem is likely to fluctuate, depending on one's level of familiarity, comfort, and training.

The Role of Parents, Students, Educators, and Employers

The people with whom the young come in contact are powerful shapers of feelings, skills, and attitudes toward self and work.

The Working Committee examined the impact of three groups of people — **parents, educators,** and **employers** — and recommended ways their impact might be made more positive and affirming on young people and adult workers.

They also examined ways that students can help themselves strengthen their work ethics and achieve higher levels of self-esteem.

Parents and educators are role models. They often forget that their level of self-esteem and the strength of their work ethic are quite apparent to young people. The Working Committee recommended that both groups of influencers take stock of their own feelings and actions before advising young people about these qualities.

The Committee also recommended that parents and educators find ways to reduce the risk of failure among the children in their care. Too often children only hear negative comments from their parents and teachers.

The family provides the base for caring and nurturing. It is the place where values (personal and social responsibility) are

taught, learned, and internalized. Family values include:

- love and emotional support
- respect for others
- taking responsibility for actions
- true friendship and trust
- living as part of a community

In the home, parents' involvement or lack of it in being mentors and role models for values, attitudes and social skills sets the stage for the rest of the children's lives. The axiom "Children learn what they live, and children live what they learn" is especially true today in a loosely-knit society, where television and other media, with or without parental guidance, serve as the major source for children's "window to the world." By the time children reach elementary grades, many of their lifelong habit-patterns have been formed outside of the classroom.

In the schools, this challenge requires "extra-sensitivity" on the part of educators in providing nurturing environments, positive affirmation and motivation regarding each student's potential and the ability to facilitate cooperative or team learning. Through team learning, educators can help foster self-esteem and work ethic by motivating students to create support networks for each other as they attempt to formulate effective responses to classroom assignments, problems, and challenges.

Employers, like the economy itself, are moving into a new era of employee relations. The old adversarial approach, with the employer giving the orders and the employees accepting them, cannot survive in the new high-technology workplace where employee problem-solving, team building, and flexibility are premium requirements.

Employers must find new ways to motivate employees to use their minds as well as their muscles as they handle problems far from executive oversight. Most recommended approaches increase the employees' sense of dignity and self-worth as they are made to feel an important part of the larger enterprise. The employees increase their ability to determine and control their destiny.

Students are not victims. They have the ability to raise their expectations and achieve at levels they never imagined they could. Goal setting (short- and long-term) and setting priorities are the major keys to student success. Young people must be taught the mechanics of goal setting at an early age.

Goal setting — a component of a healthy work ethic — can result in achievements that boost self-esteem in unexpected ways. **Success breeds success and a positive self-esteem breeds a strong work ethic.** It does so as if the impact of one's self-esteem on a strong work ethic were a chemical reaction.

Recommendations

The effect of an individual's work ethic and self-esteem on employability and productivity is so crucial that it requires nothing less than a national commitment.

A two-pronged approach is envisioned, one at the national level, another at state and local levels.

At the national level, policy makers must put the building of Americans' self-esteem and work ethic at the top of the agenda. State-level initiatives are vital to this effort, both in support of and in providing systematic guidance to communities and local school districts. A number of suggestions as to how this might be done and how programs might be implemented were made.

The workplace and the school should be restructured in ways that would make them more affirming environments. Economic realities are likely to bring about changes in the workplace before changes are made in schools. For this reason, states should help facilitate programs to accomplish this goal.

The fate of children is directly affected by the fate of families. Economic challenges have made it more difficult for families (whether that is two parents, single parent, grandparent, or other) to provide a nurturing, healthy environment. As a nation, state and community, we must be committed to helping families help themselves, develop self-confidence and maintain a sense of pride.

Finally, we recommend a *de-emphasis on privileges and a re-emphasis on responsibility.* Accepting and achieving goals and responsibility effects positive work ethic and builds self-esteem. Students have a right to the privilege of a free education, but they also have a responsibility to attend school and to achieve at the highest level.

Our Most Important Job

CHAPTER 1

No matter what our primary vocation, each of us has another task — one that may be our most important one. We must help America's young people prepare for life and work in the 21st-century.

We have no choice. Our nation faces multiple crises that threaten our standard of living and challenge our natural optimism about the future. U.S. companies must succeed in world markets that have become more competitive — in terms of price, quality of product, and service — than ever before in our history.

Yet, the bulk of our emerging workforce is under-educated at best, unprepared for the demands of employment and upgraded technology-based work. Perhaps the saddest members of this group — the 27 percent of young people of high school age who have chosen to drop out of school and therefore are unavailable for learning or for skilled jobs.

Clearly, we are squandering our most precious resource — our children. Raised in the world's leading post-industrial society, school-aged Americans seem a pampered lot. They spend $40 billion a year. They spend more hours in front of TV sets than young people anywhere else on earth. Yet, a flood of reports has documented the fact that in any number of areas — health, education, housing, safety, stable family life — these young people are anything but pampered. They have been short-changed on just about all the support systems that can help them grow up to be capable, confident, dependable, successful citizens. And to add insult to injury, we often blame our young people for the failures of parents, educators, employers, political leaders and adult role models.

For the "forgotten half" — those young people who for one reason or another fail to pursue education after high school — opportunities for well-paying jobs have almost disappeared. Since 1973, the year of the first "oil shock," millions of high-paying jobs in the manufacturing sector have disappeared as employers seeking to cut costs shifted those jobs to low-wage overseas plants. Most of the service jobs that replaced them demanded few skills and rewarded workers with low pay.

While this historic shift was occurring, there were only fragmented efforts to transform secondary education into a system for equipping young workers with the skills and knowledge they would need to take advantage of the economic shifts. According to *Vanishing Dreams*, a study by the Children's Defense Fund, the results were predictably tragic:

- The median income of families with household heads under thirty fell by 26 percent between 1973 and 1989,

Qualities of a Champion:

- Attitude
- Charisma
- Dedication
- Enthusiasm
- Intuition
- Knowledge
- Motivation
- Persistence
- Potential
- Self-confidence

— Don Ross

doubling the incidence of poverty among these families to 22 percent of all young families.

- The income gap between older, better-educated workers and young workers and family heads widened alarmingly. The impact on young males with a high school education or less was particularly severe.
- Today's families are bearing the burden of massive economic and social changes. They are less able to build foundations for their own economic security, form stable families, provide adequate support for their children or have hope and confidence in the future.

The Economic Policy Institute reports that between 1979 and 1988, when much of the U.S. was thriving, annual family income of young workers actually dropped from $21,800 to $17,600. Those who were twenty-five to thirty-four years old also lost ground in terms of real income, dropping from about $33,000 a year to about $31,000. During the 1980's, researchers noted the impact of these financial pressures on key social factors:

- **Family Stability.** Even with both spouses at work, family resources were often stretched to the limit. Many of the most fragile marriages simply broke apart under grinding financial pressures.
- **Children.** Today, nearly one out of every four school-aged children is classified as poor, and a third of those children live with parents who are under thirty years old.
- **Child Supervision.** Unable to afford adequate child care, even middle-class parents were forced to leave their children on their own during part of the workday.

As a society, we pay now or pay later. Today the corrections industry is the fastest growth industry in the country. Two thousand new inmates enter the correctional system a week. On the average, it costs $25,000 per year to incarcerate an inmate with an annual total cost to taxpayers of about $5.2 billion.

The nation faces a major challenge with drugs and alcohol abuse. The impact is devastating to individuals and families. There is significant evidence that a low self-esteem perpetuates or creates the problem. Drugs and alcohol are used to give the false feeling of improved self-worth.

Young people are desperate to feel accepted and to be part of a group even if that group is a gang which uses violence to prove its strength and power.

When it comes to preparing non-college-bound students for

skilled jobs, the United States does have a choice. The nation must decide to utilize fully its vocational and applied technology education system — something it failed to do during the 1980s.

During this same period, our most successful foreign competitors took their own course of action. They continued to:

- Set high educational standards for their youth.
- Prepare their non-college-bound for skilled jobs.
- Offer students a comprehensive school-to-work transition, providing job-search guidance and even further training if required.

Their governments also support company-based training and give extensive help to unemployed workers. Most importantly, they put their systems of education in the service of economic growth.

Rediscovering Basic Traits of Success

Now, the country's leadership — on the national, state, and local levels — recognizes that something must be done to restore our strengths and maintain our economic leadership.

How can conditions be improved? Surely there is no lack of direction. Advice and suggestions come from literally hundreds of reports and proposals. There is also lack of action in the form of national and local initiatives and programs begun by schools, government agencies, private associations, and businesses in partnership with schools.

A major problem, in fact, may be that too much is happening. In education, Ernest L. Boyer, president of the Carnegie Foundation, believes that the problem is that our efforts have been more fragmented than coherent. He called for a national agenda for school reform. We need a strategy that sustains state and local leadership, while giving coherence to the effort, overall.

A coherent strategy must include the home and the workplace as well as the school. The committee came to this conclusion after a long search for fundamental themes common to both the educational process and the world of work. To focus its efforts, the committee responded to a simple question posed by the NCVE working groups: **What is it that characterizes the most successful students and the most successful workers?**

The answers — from employers and educators throughout the nation — pointed to something more profound than the mere acquisition of academic and job skills, as important as they are. The answers stressed the importance of two familiar, connected qualities: **positive self-esteem and a strong work ethic.**

Perhaps never before has the link between self-esteem and a strong work ethic been so important to young people about to enter the workforce. To thrive in the 21st-century workplace, employees must be flexible, creative problem solvers, willing to continue to learn innovations, able to set personal goals, eager to work hard for professional and personal advancement, and able to communicate and interact with their peers. Members of the Massachusetts Institute of Technology Commission on Industrial Productivity reported in 1989:

> *No longer will an employee be treated like a cog in a big and impersonal machine. From the company's point of view, the work force will be transformed from a cost factor to be minimized into a precious asset to be conserved and cultivated... On the employer's side, greater caring for employees is essential, since under the*

rules of their new citizenship, employees will be expected to give so much more of themselves to their work.

— Made in America: Regaining the Productive Edge

Such an environment requires workers who are confident in their ability to solve problems and eager to apply their knowledge in creative ways. "Work ethic," commented Dr. Denis Waitley, a preeminent author and speaker on human performance, "develops in a natural and healthy way out of a background of healthy self-esteem. People who are taught to appreciate their self-worth are more likely than others to invest in those inputs — schooling and the acquisition of skills, for example — that will help them improve their performance on and off the job."

Performance is only a reflection of internal worth, not a measure of it. Individuals need to feel love and worth inside themselves before they can offer it to anyone else in a relationship or in a career.

When people have a negative work ethic, they say "It's not worth the effort it takes to succeed." What they really mean, deep down, is "I'm not worth the effort it takes to succeed."

On and off the job, all individuals are worth whatever effort it takes to succeed. They view success in the broadest terms, as did the American poet and essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson, who defined success this way:

To laugh often and love much; to win the respect of intelligent persons and the affection of children; to earn the approbation of honest citizens and endure the betrayal of false friends; to appreciate beauty; to find the best in others; to give of one's self; to leave the world a bit better, whether by a healthy child, a garden patch or a redeemed social condition; to have played and laughed with enthusiasm and sung with exultation; to know even one life has breathed easier because you have lived — this is to have succeeded.

Success can therefore be defined as the ability to establish long-lasting relationships. According to Dr. Orv Owens, here are four types of relationships which determine a person's success in life.

1. **Inward:** How a person relates to self (self-esteem, self-image, and self-acceptance). All success begins with a strong inward sense of self because it determines the ability to relate to any other person.

Four Basic Fears That Influence A Persons Self-Esteem:

- Fear of failure
- Fear of loss of position or power
- Fear of ambiguity or non-structured situation
- Fear of ridicule or rejection

—Orv Owen

> **"Self-esteem means that no opinion and no judgment is so vitally critical to my own growth and development as that which I hold of myself. The most important conversations, briefings, meetings, and lectures I will ever have will be those that I hold with myself in the privacy of my own mind."**
>
> *— Denis Waitley*

2. **Upward:** How a person relates to superiors, leadership, or those in authority will help determine how much opportunity a person has to grow and develop.
3. **Downward:** How a person relates to subordinates, customers, or any person for whom he or she is responsible also helps determine a person's potential for success.
4. **Outward:** How a person relates to peers is the basis of teamwork and helps determine the ability to assume responsibility and contribute to company goals.

The first six years of life have tremendous impact upon a person's inward relationship because we try to determine who we are in that time frame. We believe over 80% of our self-image is formulated by age six and will have impact upon every decision we make the rest of our lives.

Unfortunately, so many forces in our society have a negative effect, resulting in children who have a deep inferiority complex that affects them for a lifetime. There are four fears that commonly develop which cause poor self-esteem.

1. **Fear of failure.** The person with a fear of failure will run from responsibility, believing it is better not to try than to try and fail. If you don't try, no one will know you are a failure.
2. **Fear of loss of position or power.** This fear causes a person to be pushy, domineering, argumentative and power hungry. These people will say or do almost anything to establish themselves in a position of power, invariably destroying relationships.
3. **Fear of ambiguity or lack of predictability.** This fear will demand perfection, correct those who are not exact, and gravitate toward working situations that demand absolutes, details, facts, and figures, turning people off with severe criticism.
4. **Fear of ridicule or rejection.** This fear drives people pleasers, those whose lives are determined by what people will think. Peer pressure has a tremendous impact on these people at all ages.

For parents, teachers, and young people, the first step is to recognize the fear and work to dissolve it.

Students need to learn maturity — how to take responsibility for every thought, action, and reaction.

Parents need to learn that projecting a positive attitude about their child will inspire that child to have a positive self-image.

Educators need to realize that the art of teaching is to motivate each student to believe that "the teacher believes I can learn and do well," — which they invariably do. In a report *Improving Black Student Achievement by Enhancing Students' Self-Image*, Crystal Kuykendall states, "Students who feel good about themselves and who score high on self-esteem are also the highest achievers. Thus, the development of a child's self-esteem is perhaps the most important barometer of future success."

Employers need to learn that developing employees to the maximum is the only effective way of increasing production efficiency. Production can increase by up to one-third through better understanding and motivation of employees.

We are interested in success in the workplace, (where workers in the 21st-century will spend more than one third of their adulthood) in the home and for the individual.

It doesn't matter if you've
won before
It makes no difference what
the half-time score
So keep on trying and
you'll find you've won!
Just grab your dream and
then believe it.
Go out and work, and you'll
achieve it.
If you think you can, you can.
If you think you can, you can.

— From a poem by
Denis Waitley

Self-Esteem. Self-esteem is the way one feels about oneself. People with high or positive self-esteem generally feel good about themselves. People with low or negative self-esteem generally undervalue themselves.

Self-esteem is:

- the deep-down, inside-the-skin feeling of one's own worth.
- the fundamental belief that he or she is competent to handle the challenges of life and the workplace.
- the self-respect that gives one belief in the right to find happiness in one's personal life and vocation.
- the true feeling people have about themselves when they are alone without all the protective social disguises and job titles.
- a way of feeling about oneself. If one accepts and likes oneself as that person is, warts and all, one is said to have high self-esteem.
- having the character to be accountable for oneself and to act responsibly toward others.

Self-esteem is not:

- based on material wealth, social disguises, or job titles.

This personal perception of one's own worth is learned, and it is not necessarily the same in all situations. Most people have an overall or global feeling about their own worth. However, self-esteem has a situational aspect as well. Individuals can experience periods of low self-esteem during unfamiliar situations or those for which they are untrained. According to the National Council on Self-Esteem, two of every three Americans suffer from low self-esteem. On the other hand, they may experience periods of high self-esteem during familiar situations or those for which they are well trained.

Work Ethic. Like self-esteem, one's work ethic — that system of beliefs in what is right or wrong that workers bring to a job — can be positive or negative, strong or weak and situational.

Work ethic is:

- a belief that honest effort equals an honest day's pay.
- the values, attitudes, responsibilities and skills that are necessary for productive work habits — dependable, prompt, congenial, responsible, optimistic, honest, eager to perform well.
- the desire to perform to the best of one's ability. That desire includes the desire for learning throughout life.

Work ethic is not:

- sacrificing the well-being of your family to work overtime.
- coming to work late and taking off early.
- avoiding work that is yours to do.
- putting other people down to build yourself up.

Work ethic then can be defined in a very simple manner as

the way (based on their value system) in which a person approaches a job.

People with a strong work ethic display many if not all of the qualities of a model worker. They are willing to put in extra effort (e.g., taking courses after hours) to produce a better product or render a better service, and committed to teamwork and to an organization's success if the job calls for it. People with a weak work ethic lack some or all of these desirable qualities.

A work ethic cannot exist in a vacuum. Low job satisfaction and inadequate motivation are likely to have a negative impact on a person's work ethic. Moreover, a worker's self-esteem is likely to be a factor in the way he or she approaches a job. Work ethic is your self-esteem at work.

Building Positive Self-Esteem And A Strong Work Ethic

Self-esteem and a personal work ethic are developed and learned as we grow up. The way that happens is usually a hit-or-miss process that is based on what children learn from the actions of the adults around them. Children imitate adults. What role models do is more important than what they say.

> *Self-esteem and a work ethic in children is probably caught as much as taught. Children learn from their adult models. Adults must be who they want children to become. This is key to the development of every characteristic we want for our children.*
>
> *— Judy Kosterman Schmitz, Ph.D.*

We can and must help young people build a positive self-image and a strong work ethic by:

- Consistently providing a positive role model in our behavior.
- Fostering self-confidence.
- Encouraging young people to be accountable and take responsibility for their actions.
- Helping them establish and achieve expectations.
- Teaching them about the benefits of good grooming and self-improvement. Feeling good about oneself and looking good improves attitude and dependability.

An education program for self-esteem should not be just remedial but actually preventative and therefore worth the investment. A systematic program in the schools is needed to rebuild self-esteem and create strong work ethic. Schools should encourage community service and practice in the skills of productive employment.

Take A Moment To Listen

Take a moment to listen today
To what your children are
trying to say;
Listen today, whatever you do,
Or they won't be there to
listen to you.

Listen to their problems,
listen to their needs,
Praise their smallest triumphs,
praise their smallest deeds;
Tolerate their chatter,
amplify their laughter,
Find out what's the matter,
find out what they're after.

But tell them that you love them,
every single night;
And though you scold them,
be sure you hold them;
Tell them "Everything's all right;
tomorrow's looking bright!"

Take a moment to listen today
To what your children are
trying to say;
Listen today, whatever you do
And they will come back to
listen to you.

— From a poem by
Denis & Susan Waitley

The Role of Parents

CHAPTER 4

"The high calling of parenthood must be more adequately recognized, respected, and honored by our society," concluded the National Council of Juvenile and Family Court Judges in 1989. "Therein lies the future of our nation."

James Agee, the novelist, put it another way. "In every child who is born, under no matter what circumstance, the potentiality of the human race is born again."

The role of the family is central in developing a positive self-esteem and a strong work ethic in children. In this belief they are joined by any number of expert observers. In *The Antecedents of Self-Esteem*, Stanley Coopersmith describes the loving context in which children witness success. He observes that a child feels the attention and approval expressed by his parents as favoring and supportive. Children will also appear to interpret parents' interest and concern as a sign of their importance; therefore, they will regard themselves as favorable. This is success in its most personal expression — the concern, the attention, and the time of significant others.

Coopersmith drew several conclusions about parents who foster healthy self-esteem in their children.

1. The parents are themselves endowed with high levels of self-esteem.
2. The parents demonstrate their respect for their children's rights and opinions.
3. They set limits on their children's actions. "Parental warmth, defined limits, and respectful treatment lead to self-esteem in children," he concluded.

All too often — especially among the more affluent members of our society — it is these limits that get neglected. One member of the Working Committee, Denis E. Waitley Ph.D. (see chapter 2, p. 5, li. 8), spoke of an unsettling meeting he had recently with top Asian business executives:

> *They told me that Americans need to address a big problem immediately to remain competitive in the world arena. The problem is arrogance and entitlement. Our kids are growing up in a TV and MTV world of "immediate sensual gratification." In trying to protect our individuality and "do our own thing," the Asian executives said, we have lost our capacity to serve the world market with quality efforts. America has rested on her laurels and like every society in*

history that has basked in its own success, it is in the process of getting knocked off its perch.

Parents must also be aware of their importance as role models. Modeling behavior and positive reinforcement are two key behaviors that parents can use to influence children. To quote an old cliche, actions speak louder than words and talking about positive self-esteem and a strong work ethic does little to develop these values in children. Children can see and hear when parents' work ethic is a sham and when their parents have little self-esteem.

Nonetheless, many parents and many teachers often fail to look at themselves.

Look in the mirror and take responsibility for where you are in life, for the unmet goals and the disappointments. Determine what avenues you may develop to improve your self-esteem, maintain a healthy body, and define ways to improve your family life. And don't be afraid to accept and love yourself. Hold realistic and positive expectations for your children. Provide a positive environment which encourages creativity, and respects human diversity and hard work.

— Pat Shinsky Ph.D.

These are tall orders, yet essential ones. In the two-paycheck family, as noted earlier in this report, children often get short shrift as their parents struggle to balance demanding careers or simple economic survival with family life. *Yet, no amount of success can compensate for failure in the home.*

The gifts only compound the error. Giving kids money so they can hang out at the mall is the worst thing parents can do. Parents who give their kids fish, end up with kids who will never learn how to fish. Parents need to spend more time mentoring and setting an example with ethics, morals, homework, reading, and community volunteer projects with their kids.

If they simply cannot devote adequate attention to their parental responsibilities, parents must make sure there is a caring adult — a grandparent, a housekeeper, a permanent baby- sitter — to serve as a loving surrogate parent. Money is more wisely spent on a qualified surrogate than on gifts a child can easily live without. According to Jhoon Rhee, a member of NCVE, "self-discipline and self-respect are the foundations for all learning. Our children must be taught to respect parents, teachers, elders, peers and everything in the universe."

"Parents cannot leave a better legacy to the world than well-educated children."

"We have a case of parent delinquency in America today. Parents are not assuming the obligations and responsibilities that are theirs."

It is important to develop a loving, trusting relationship with children. In *The 7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, Stephen Covey states, "Trust is the highest form of human motivation. It brings out the very best in people. But it takes time and patience, and it doesn't preclude the necessity to train and develop people so that their competency can rise to the level of that trust." **Parental involvement is the key to building self-esteem and helping children be successful in school.** This is true for children of all ages.

SUMMARY STEPS

Actions To Be Taken By Parents

- Realize the importance of being a parent — no amount of success can compensate for failure in the home.
- Spend quality time with your children — give them the attention and love they need.
- Set limits on your children's actions — use firm but loving discipline.
- Be a positive role model for self-esteem and a good work ethic — actions speak louder than words.
- Teach children to respect parents, teachers, elders, peers and themselves.
- Be involved with your children's schooling and recreation.
- Tell your children often what they do "right" and that you love them.
- Teach children to use their time wisely, i.e. choose TV programs, movies and books which will make them better persons.
- Remember life-time habits are formed early in life. The family is the place where values are taught and learned.
- Help children (at an early age) set realistic goals.
- Establish trust with your children so they feel they can tell you the truth.
- Respect your children and try to understand their point of view.
- Get to know your children's friends.
- Build things with your children. Working together fosters a good work ethic.

The Role of Educators

CHAPTER 5

Educators — teachers, administrators, and school-board members — have a key role to play in building positive self-esteem and strong work ethic among America's youth. Over the past three decades, public schools in the U.S. have moved away from systematically teaching the language, attitudes, and skills of a strong work ethic. The emphasis on academics is surely important. But this emphasis, all too often, leaves students with too few opportunities for success.

According to Dr. Waitley, 80 percent of children entering their first year of school feel good about themselves. By the time they reach fifth grade, the number has dropped to 20 percent. By the time they become high school seniors, the proportion has dropped to 5 percent. Though schools alone can't be held to blame for all or even most of this slippage, they certainly play a part, if only in their failure to establish programs for counteracting the negative effects of unfeeling parents and an impersonal society.

Somewhere along the way, between age 6 and 16, 75 percent of our kids lose their self-esteem.

Recently, the American Association of University Women (AAUW) conducted a nationwide poll on self-esteem, education and career aspirations, interest in math and science among girls and boys ages 9 to 15. The poll revealed a significant loss of self-esteem in a variety of areas. As boys and girls grow older, however, the study revealed that the loss was most dramatic and long-lasting among girls.

Further analysis of self-esteem suggests that peer acceptance is not the dominant influence as has been previously suggested. Academics and the importance of the family have an impact in adolescent self-image. The report also measured the effects of schools and teachers and the teaching of math and science.

The survey found a strong relationship between math and science and self-esteem in adolescence. In other words, if students liked math and science, the sense of self-worth and aspirations were greater than in those who did not like those areas.

The survey points out the importance of teachers as role models. Teachers have an opportunity to affect the self-esteem among their students by instilling in them confidence to pursue their interests and aspirations. Thus, teachers must have a positive self-esteem.

The California Task Force, to promote self-esteem and personal and social responsibility, made a special point of emphasizing the importance of schools in shaping a young person's self-esteem. School personnel and practices have a great deal of influence over the early psychological, social, and character

Listen For The Positive

Young people have always responded to popular music, and composers and performers have often used music to deliver a message to their youthful audience — sometimes negative, sometimes positive.

Teenagers especially will "hear" the message of a popular song that mirrors their hopes, dreams, and frustrations far more accurately than adults who address them by beginning every line with "don't."

What should they do? Listen for the positive in words that outline a healthy, caring, and constructive behavior pattern.

There are songs that say what adults ought to say to young people, painting a word picture of what they can be, how they can fulfill their own aspirations, set positive goals and achieve them.

Responsible rap and hip-hop performers can deliver a valuable message. Perhaps the essence of what young people should listen for is captured in the Harold Arlen-Johnny Mercer song of World War II that said, "Accentuate the positive, eliminate the negative, and don't mess with mister in between."

development of children. Schools can sometimes mitigate the detrimental effects of family dysfunction and abuse and even foster self-esteem where little previously existed. On the other hand, schools may — through insensitive and overly competitive policies and interactions — undo the sense of worth instilled in a child by his or her parents. And while schools alone cannot be held responsible for the condition of our children, they should, working with parents and community, be part of the solution.

Many experts fault the use of competition as a motivator in the schools. It results in a few winners and a lot of losers. "At the heart of the achievement process, " says Professor Martin Covington of the University of California, Berkeley, "we find a struggle which, when reduced to its essential elements, represents the need to establish and maintain feelings of worth and dignity."

The California Task Force which Professor Covington advised explains: In a competitive system, successes and failures become strongly associated with high or low ability. Ability is seen as an immutable factor over which a failing student has little control. This promotes learned helplessness. That is, to avoid the feelings of worthlessness that stem from trying hard and failing, the students stop trying. They thus protect a fragile sense of worth by getting little education. In the report on *Enhancing Student's Self-image*, Crystal Kuykendall stresses that when teachers focus on strengths, offer encouragement, and make children feel confident, a positive self-image can develop.

Educators, notably classroom teachers and guidance counselors, must help students sort out their abilities and aspirations without denying their hopes and ambitions.

Some experts encourage the use of tools such as the Myers-Briggs Type Indicator (MBTI) a self-administering questionnaire designed to identify personality strengths and attributes. The MBTI has been used successfully to help students and counselors better understand the match between their interests and behavior in the workplace. Considered to be the most widely administered personality profile assessment instrument, it's growing acceptance in the workplace makes it an ideal vehicle for use in a school setting as a preparatory tool for school to work transition.

Members of the Working Committee, like experts elsewhere, recommend restructuring schools to ensure the success of all students.

At the classroom level, this might mean making more use of team or cooperative learning — a method that involves small groups of students in problem-solving activities. Cooperative learning can create a network of peer support, encourage responsibility for self and others, and improve academic performance. It is this sort of cooperative endeavor that marks the "Collaborative"

workplace of the future that the MIT Commission on Industrial Productivity described in *Made in America*.

Low Academic Self-Image and High Social Self-Image

Characteristics of Low Academic Self-Image	*Characteristics of High Social Self-Image*
Failure to complete work	Confidence in performing before others
Hostility/disruptive behavior or defiant speech in class	Unique ability in social skills, such as sports, dancing, "playing the dozens" or rapping
Frequent use of excuses	Mutual support system with peers
Daydreaming, poor attention span	Keen interest and preoccupation with social activities, such as listening to music, dancing, playing sports or doing artwork
Little or no eye contact	Nonverbal communication and eye contact
Fear of failure and of trying	Persistence in the learning and performance of social skills (e.g., bike riding, card playing, music, or sports)
Dislike for school, the teacher, or both	Desire to be liked in social functions/ notice of others
No volunteering or participating; repeated and deliberate tardiness and absences	Extensive desire for interaction with those most encouraging and supportive
Tendency to be withdrawn and isolated	Friendly, sincere behavior
Facial expressions and body movement tend to show visible pain, frustration and anxiety	Facial expressions and body movements reflect enjoyment

(From Kuykendall, Crystal. A study of the responses of over 2,000 teachers surveyed 1984-1987 in Washington, D.C.)

Tasks For Teachers

Teachers must also be made aware of their own self-esteem and work ethics, perhaps through commercially available in-service programs such as *Self-Esteem: The Transferable Skill*, produced by Advanced Learning, Inc. This video-and-discussion program suggests how teachers can improve their own self-esteem and transfer this skill to students. Teachers convey their own self-esteem and value systems on to their students, although sometimes they are totally unaware of this fact. Teachers and school administrators should be excellent role models for self-esteem and work ethic.

Helpful Tips on Giving Supportive Feedback

- Children respond better when eye contact is direct, sincere, loving and encouraging.
- Children are more likely to modify behavior when comments are directed at specific behavior, rather than general actions. For example, children are likely to feel worse when they are told they have "misbehaved" than when they are told what specific action caused a teacher to think they were disobedient. When possible, the child should be talked to privately.
- Children also respond better when a teacher's comments are descriptive rather than evaluative. By describing their own reactions as opposed to the student's behavior, teachers are more likely to be seen as supportive rather than judgmental.
- Children must feel a teacher is taking into account their needs; therefore, a teacher's comments should reflect genuine concern.
- Comments are most effective when timed close to the behavior. Children are unlikely to remember feedback that is given long after the action or assignment is completed.
- By checking with individual students, sometimes privately, teachers can make sure they understand their comments and feelings.

"One of the greatest services you can render to children is to motivate them to select the right kind of friends and associates."

Rhonda Brandt suggests that teachers utilize the Self-Esteem Skill Building Process: Help students to observe those situations in which they feel worthless. Choose and *imitate* a role model they respect. Set *goals* to achieve competence in those situations that provoke feelings of worthlessness. *Repeat* the steps of observation and imitation until they have conquered their negative feelings about themselv and developed positive self-esteem habits.

Dr. Davi 'rooks calls for a systematic school-wide instructional program based on the issues surrounding work ethic and self-esteem. "If we teach responsibility," he believes, "(students) will teach themselves the rest." *How to Be Successful in 10 Minutes a Day*, a daily advisor/advisee program created by The Thomas Jefferson Center, does just that. It teaches personal and social responsibility skills, such as being on time, being prepared, being a good listener, setting goals, and planning for the future.

Surely there is no lack of recommendations on ways to improve the climate within the school for fostering positive self-esteem and a strong work ethic. What appears to be lacking, in any systematic, consistent way, is action.

SUMMARY STEPS

Actions To Be Taken By Educators

- Give positive reinforcement to all students — help them experience success.
- Help students to set both short- and long-term goals.
- Help students identify and build on their abilities and goals.
- Provide opportunities for peer support through team or cooperative learning and student organizations.
- Have a positive self-esteem and a good work ethic themselves.
- Encourage students to select positive role models around them (teach how and why).
- Provide positive learning experiences for students who have different learning styles.
- Genuinely care about students — teach about life not just subjects.
- Provide classroom curriculum that specifically focuses on self-esteem and the requirements for success on the job.
- Have higher expectations for all students.
- Encourage peer teaching. A student who becomes a teacher, even for a short period of time each day, will have more respect for the role of the teacher and more self-respect.

The Role of Students

CHAPTER 6

Young people in school, from preschool through college, are in an extraordinary situation. On one hand, their status as students insulates them from many of the risks associated with making choices. While they are in school, they travel paths largely programmed by adults. One grade leads to another, one course to another, one exam to another.

On the other hand, they are supposed to learn a large body of knowledge, absorb certain values and attitudes, and emerge miraculously as productive young adults despite the mixed signals they receive from the adult world.

They often face conflicting pressures, confusing guidance, and inconsistent treatment. Students rarely understand what is expected of them, why "certain values and attitudes" are important to them — not just to adult society — and how to go about acquiring the basic tools of success we call self-esteem and work ethic. They see no near-term need for the education received.

No wonder more than one in four high school students drops out.

However, young people can help themselves stay on track and make it through to productive, satisfying adulthood.

Most do not. Only 5 to 8 percent of high school graduates have acquired skills that prepare them for demanding work either in college or in the workplace, according to the National Assessment of Education Progress (NAEP) Study. Worse, on graduation day, nearly 95 percent of all high school seniors surveyed felt they had little to be proud of except having survived twelve years of education. Self-esteem is largely underdeveloped and work ethic rarely understood by that 95 percent.

How can young people be helped to nourish their self-esteem and raise their expectations? We need to make clear the rules and help them set realistic goals which can be measured, recognized, and achieved in small, tangible steps.

Teaching the basic language of values that is the cornerstone of a strong work ethic is a good starting point. Systematic instruction related to value-laden words, such as commitment, honesty, and goal setting, must be introduced into schools as early as kindergarten. In some schools, students are being taught goal setting, focusing on strengths and skills to set and achieve high expectations for themselves. There needs to be a greater commitment on the part of educators to include in their lesson plans or to set aside classroom instructional time to teach these skills and to assist teachers through course development, identifying materials and in-service training.

Goal setting should be taught in the earlier grades. Young

Rules of Life

- Be honest and dependable.
- Be reliable and punctual.
- Get along well with people.
- Cooperate with supervisors.
- Accept and handle responsibility.
- Be willing to undergo further job skill training.
- Think of self as worthy person.
- Communicate orally and listen effectively.
- Work with minimum supervision.
- Solve personal and professional problems.
- Possess entry-level job skills/ knowledge.
- Read with understanding.
- Understand required mathematics.

children can learn to set goals; if goal setting and goal attainment occur before the age of six, the chances are much greater that this process will continue through childhood, adolescence, and adulthood.

To succeed, of course, students need to see results. "Begin with the easiest-to-achieve incremental steps," advises Dr. Judi Schmitz. "As we take each 'next step' and succeed, we celebrate the small wins and are encouraged to go on."

Small successes can add up to a strengthened work ethic and positive self-esteem. "When students identify and practice these skills, they can develop a sense of self-worth." He explains:

> *For example, students who are taught that being on time is a responsible act and who learn to practice such behavior begin to recognize that they fit into the larger scheme of things. By acknowledging this, they build self-esteem.*
>
> *— Don Steele, Ph.D.*

The goal, says Dr. Steele, is to help students realize they have power over their own lives despite their circumstances. According to Dr. Steele, they "combine a mind-set of valuing work with a strong belief system that 'I can make things happen in my life, regardless of the circumstance I may find myself in now.'"

Vince Maiorany from the U.S. Department of Education is convinced that students do respond to a code of values that are clearly established as standards for adults and young people. He has a check list of 16 points of progress that are the basics of building self-esteem by students themselves.

- Character
- Respect yourself and others
- Appearance/Self image
- Organization
- Integrity
- Persistence
- Reliability
- Positive attitude
- Feel good about yourself
- Be your own hero
- Be your own person
- Speak for yourself
- Accept challenges
- Common sense
- Express enthusiasm
- Think and stand up for yourself

Mr. Maiorany also stresses the importance of physical

exercise in developing confidence, self-discipline and enthusiasm in accomplishing the challenges in life.

Don Ross, in his article titled "Mental Genetics," June 1990, urges students to see themselves as champions in the making. He recommends students develop mental power to become champions through the following steps:

1. **Goal Setting** — decide to dedicate the time and effort.
2. **Commitment** — promise yourself to stick to your goal.
3. **Visualization** — picture your goal in your mind.
4. **Motivation** — create the right mood before and during the times you work on your goal.
5. **Concentration** — thinking and doing each step to accomplish your goal.
6. **Discipline** — consistency in working on your goal — doing it even when you think you don't want to or it's not convenient.
7. **Persistence** — determination to adhere to the first six phases until the goal is reached, then setting new goals and continuing.

Dr. Sherman Titens, from his background as president of the Fromm Institute in Kansas City, Missouri, suggests that students:

- Establish expectations — create a vision for themselves.
- Develop individual achievable goals.
- Study young people who have achieved success from similar circumstances.
- Look to adults for positive role models.
- Create and follow a plan of action to reach the goals.
- Realize that a strong work ethic and positive self-esteem are the basis for all their expectations and attainments of their adult lives.
- Learn the value of "perseverance" — keep trying.

Gary Edwards, executive director of the Ethics Resource Center, believes that students can and must be taught "to incorporate ethical considerations into their decision making, while educators and employers alike [must] refrain from rewarding behavior that ultimately is a disservice to society." The Center, in its *Ethics for Life* video series for children as young as four or five, features open-ended dramatization of common ethical conflicts. The videos, together with special teacher materials, help young people develop a clearer understanding and appreciation of the importance of ethical behavior in everyday life by seeing and discussing real life situations.

Young people learn from their peers as well as from parents and other adults. During the adolescent years especially — when parental influence declines and peer power dominates — young people shape their lives through their friends.

Successful Model Programs:

- Vocational Student Organizations
- Junior Achievement
- Boy Scouts of America
- Girl Scouts of America
- 4-H
- Junior Chamber of Commerce
- Civitan Student Leadership Conference
- Michigan State University's Student Foundation
- Kent Amo's Program of Young Adults in Washington, D.C.
- Betty Kennedy's Community School in Erie, Pennsylvania
- Double E. Program — Education and Employment in Chicago Loop on Water Street

There is a window of opportunity opening but once during the teenage years.

One of the most effective ways that young people can help themselves to reinforce positive values is through organizations. Here the lessons of teamwork, accountability, commitment, and integrity have vital meaning.

Student organizations should be encouraged and supported by educators, parents, and the business community. The achievements of these groups should be celebrated and publicized. They should receive the same attention and recognition as the sports teams. They are living, working expressions of self-esteem and work ethic.

Ultimately it is up to the individual to respond. What students can do for themselves is to recognize the benefits of learning, adopt the basic social values, accept their intrinsic worth, and make the most of the opportunities presented to become happy productive adults.

Eleanor Roosevelt once declared that no one can make you feel inferior without your consent. Her husband Franklin D. Roosevelt said in his first presidential inaugural address that we have nothing to fear but fear itself. Young people as students can begin building self-esteem and work ethic with those two powerful ideas.

SUMMARY STEPS

Actions To Be Taken By Students

- Realize that you are important.
- Learn to set goals and work to accomplish them.
- Develop self-discipline in doing school work, being on time, and being dependable.
- Understand that you can make good things happen in your life.
- Keep physically fit and be proud of your appearance.
- Select positive role models around you and seek friends who help you be a better person.
- Get involved with student organizations.
- Learn how to learn — you will need to do this all your life.
- Stay in school — an education can help you through life's ups and downs.
- Do not label people or stereotype them — get to know them instead.
- Think on your own — do not give in to peer pressure.
- Be involved in the community.
- Grasp what you have learned and use it to serve your family, your community, and your environment.

The Role of Employers

In our economy, employers shoulder most of the economic risk, and in return expect a lot from their employees. But the workplace is changing quickly and drastically.

The increasing complexity of the workplace will require employers to treat their workforce like "a precious asset to be conserved and cultivated," in the words of the MIT Commission on Industrial Productivity. This is a welcome development that may well lead to a stronger work ethic and higher self-esteem among employees.

The California Task Force explains why such changes pay off:

> *Environments that recognize and respect the dignity and worth of every human being keep the human spirit intact, enhance self-esteem, and increase productivity. These human beings, then, can help others. People who work in positive and affirming environments are better able to be agents of personal and social responsibility.*

It is time for employers to recognize that it is in their interest to find ways to let their employees "grow" on the job. Many business executives want the loyalty and dedication of their employees. What they should want for their employees is that they be inspired to pass their own internal quality on to the customer through the finest products and services possible.

Employers have a responsibility to clearly delineate the responsibilities of employees. They also have a responsibility to structure the workplace in a way that encourages a non-adversarial relationship between employer and employees, recognize achievement, and provide opportunities for those who have a limited work ethic to develop the skills and attitudes necessary for a positive contribution in the workplace. Employers need to study their corporations and analyze whether they are utilizing the minds and creativity of their employees to the fullest.

In return, employers can expect employees to bring to them — or develop within the organization — the skills that the company needs to thrive. A 1989 report by the American Society for Training and Development and the U.S. Department of Labor listed the workplace basics that employers want. They include:

- Learning to learn — the "most basic of all skills," enabling employees to use new information easily and quickly.

> **"You can read volumes upon volumes as to the cause of crime, but crime is literally caused by the lack of one thing, a feeling of moral responsibility on the part of people. And the reason the people lack a feeling of moral responsibility is because they lack a guilt feeling. Thus they do not develop their own character, for their conscience is dulled and doesn't guide them."**
>
> *— J. Edgar Hoover*

- Reading, writing, computation — the traditional basic skills.
- Listening and oral communication — face-to-face exchanges of ideas.
- Creative thinking and problem-solving — the wherewithal to help their employers "transcend barriers to improve productivity and competitiveness."
- Personal management — a grab-bag of skills relating to a strong work ethic and including positive self-esteem, goal-setting, self-motivation, and the drive to seek personal and professional improvement.
- Interpersonal skills, negotiation, and teamwork — prerequisites to excellence and success in the 21st-century workplace.
- Organizational effectiveness and leadership — skills that improve workers' ability to help their employers achieve goals.

Employers who treat their employees with dignity and respect, allowing them to grow on the job, will be able to get and retain employees who are equipped with the basic skills they want. For the employer, as for the employee, explains Rhonda Brandt, it is all a question of attitude. "When employers, through their management style, reinforce all the 'bad' they see in their employees, the employees will develop exactly as the employers thought they would."

For their own self-interest, however, most employers in the 21st-century workplace will no doubt follow the adage: "if you want people to think, let them."

The trick, says Ken Blanchard, author of *The One Minute Manager*, is to "catch people in the act of doing something right." In a well-structured, affirming work environment, that should not be a hard task for astute managers.

Family solidarity and support is a major opportunity for businesses.

Those that have paid attention to family stress with such provisions as parental leave, shared job opportunities, and leave for sick children, and who have made it a family-friendly workplace have no problems with shortages. Child Care Action Committee in New York City has a list. If the government and businesses could see the family as nurturing the self-esteem of small children and their future employees, we might turn around the family failures in our society.

That's our challenge.

SUMMARY STEPS

Actions To Be Taken By Employers

- Have a win/win environment — loyalty and ethics are a two-way street (what goes around comes around).
- Recognize the achievements and positive contributions of all employees.
- Give employees the opportunity and encouragement to improve their knowledge and abilities.
- Develop policies that encourage and allow employees to be responsible parents.
- Structure a work environment that builds people up rather than tears them down — treat employees with dignity and respect, and as if they were customers.
- Provide an opportunity to learn through employee staff training about self-esteem and how to enhance it.

SUMMARY & CONCLUSIONS

The way one feels about oneself (self-esteem) and the way in which a person approaches a job (work ethic) are so much a part of the same fabric that it is almost impossible to conceive of one without the other. An individual's self-esteem both shapes and is shaped by that person's work ethic, no matter how strong or weak it is. Without doubt the nation's economic health in this increasingly competitive world requires a strong individual work ethic. Thus, it is in the interest of the nation to create those conditions that allow people to find ways to increase the level of their self-esteem and strengthen their work ethic.

To effect the necessary changes, the Work Ethic/Self-Esteem Working Committee has concluded that nothing less than a national commitment is required — "the same way we put a man on the moon," as one committee member put it. We envision a two-pronged policy, one at the national level, another at the state and local levels. It should be a cooperative effort that starts in the home with parents and is further supported by business, industry, labor, and education.

More specifically, we need to restructure the workplace and the school in order to enhance self-esteem and strengthen the individual's work ethic. The states must support programs to accomplish those goals in the schools. The goals are simply too important to be left to chance or unstructured changes.

There needs to be more emphasis on responsibilities and less on privileges. We have privileges (rights) as Americans. But we also have responsibilities. We have the right and privilege to a free public education. But we also have a responsibility to attend school regularly and to achieve at the highest levels we can. This is our challenge as we struggle to ready our workforce for the 21st-century. That challenge provides an opportunity to rediscover our national vision by equipping our young people with the positive self-esteem and strong work ethic that will increase their employability and boost the nation's productivity.

The National Council on Vocational Education

The National Council on Vocational Education is a Presidentially appointed body comprised of seventeen members with the majority being from business and industry. The members appointed to the Council have substantial management and policy responsibility in small business, public or private institutions, and organized labor; one represents the National commission for Employment Policy established under the Job Training Partnership Act.

The National Council on Vocational Education is authorized by the Carl D. Perkins Vocational and Applied Technology Education Act to advise the President, Congress, and the Secretary of Education on:

- the effectiveness of the Vocational Education Act or its implementation in achieving its stated purposes, and in providing students with skills that meet needs of employers.
- strategies for increasing cooperation between business and vocational education so that training is available for new technologies for which there is a demand.
- implementation of the Job Training Partnership Act.
- practical approaches to retraining adult workers, and to enhancing education, business, and labor cooperation in retraining efforts.
- effective ways of providing access to information regarding the market demands for skills that will enable State and local personnel to develop responsive vocational education curricula.
- the vocational education needs of the handicapped and the level of participation of the handicapped in Vocational Education programs.
- provide current information on the types and levels of occupational competencies necessary for entry and sustained productive employment.

Previous Federal legislation authorized a National Advisory Council on Vocational Education. The 1984 legislation changed the name, membership and mandates of the Council, but the basic purpose — to provide advice at the national level on vocational education — remained the same.

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